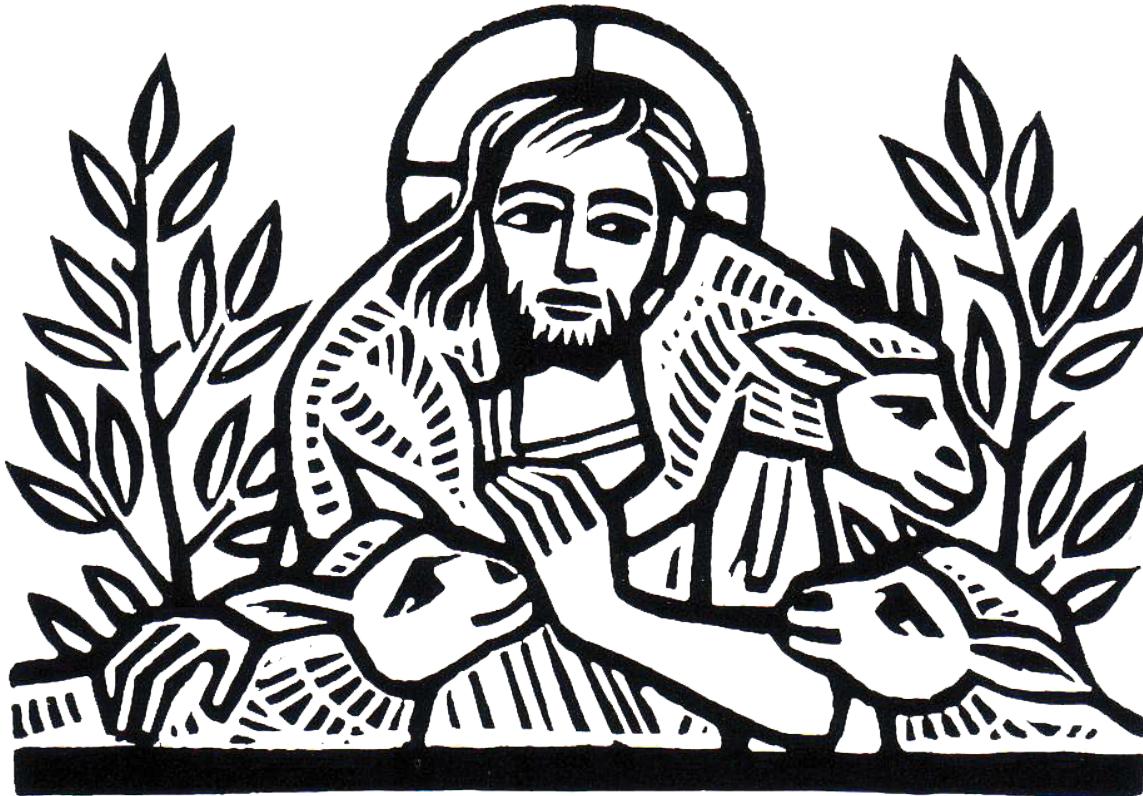


The Shepherd's Meal



Tonight we remember the Birth of our Savior, Jesus. This “Shepherd’s Meal” is for us to sit and reflect on what it must have been like to be a Shepherd the night an angel appeared to them.

LUKE 1:26

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, **27** to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, a descendant of King David.

28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.

30 “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God!

31 You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. **32** He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. **33** And he will reign over the House of Jacob forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

LUKE 2

The Birth of Jesus

2 At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. **2** (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. **4** And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. **5** He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.

6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. **7** She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Sing "Silent Night"

The Shepherds and Angels

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. **9** Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, **10** but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. **11** The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! **12** And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

14

"Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

16 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. **17** After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. **18** All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished, **19** but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. **20** The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

Discuss what it would be like to be one of the shepherds together.

Sing "First Noel"

Tonight, We eat foods typically found in Bethlehem, that the shepherd, and even Jesus, would have eaten. Just like passover, some of these foods can remind us of Jesus. Discuss these verses with each other.

The Bread: John 6:35 "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst"

Grapes: John 15:5 "**5** "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

Fruit- Matthew 7:16-17 "**16** You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Milk/cheese: 1 Peter 2:2-3" **2** Like newborn babies, you must crave pure spiritual milk so that you will grow into a full experience of salvation. Cry out for this nourishment, **3** now that you have had a taste of the Lord's kindness.

Figs: Mark 11:12-14" **12** The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. **13** He noticed a fig tree in full leaf a little way off, so he went over to see if he could find any figs. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. **14** Then Jesus said to the tree, "May no one ever eat your fruit again!"

Salt/Salty Foods: Matthew 5:13 "**13** "You are the salt of the earth."

Ask the group if they have thought of others.

Jesus, our example, reminds us that though dining with friends and family is fun, Jesus said in John 4:34 “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.”

We must take these things with us as we go in our daily lives and gather the harvest . Jesus told us “The fields are already ripe for harvest. ... the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life.

Tonight we celebrate what was foretold by the prophets:
“A ruler will come from Bethlehem,
who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.

And as the Angel’s sang to the Shepherds in the field, we also say,
“Glory to God in highest heaven,
and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

*some Verses have been shortened/omitted for time’s sake, NLT translation.